



*Gary Collins of the Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition (left) looks on as Administrator **Mike HacsKaylo** outlines the joint efforts of the Coalition and Western to bring the benefits of Federal hydropower to Great Plains tribes. (Photo by **Connie Hilzendeger**)*

Tribes and Western build relationship in UGP

The benefits of Federal hydropower continue to make a difference in the economic development and sustainability of tribal communities across the Northern Great Plains.

At the Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition Tribal Conference in Billings, Mont., Jan. 11, member tribes and Western officials discussed hydropower allocation contracts for 25 tribes. "Signing allocation contracts assures that cost-based hydroelectric power will be available to these tribes for the next 20 years," explained Public Utilities Specialist **Jon Horst**. The Mni Sose Coalition was instrumental in helping its member tribes gather technical information such as load profiles needed by Western to determine how much power to allocate to any entity.

The financial benefit of Western's 20-year commitment of 60 megawatts of power to the Upper Great Plains tribes is about \$100 million. The benefits associated

with Federal hydropower will assist tribes in creating sustainable economies, cultural well being and sovereignty on tribal lands," added UGP Power Marketing Manager **Bob Harris**.

The Mni Sose coalition recently received the Interior Department's prestigious Conservation Service Award, emphasizing how the Tribes and Western can build upon a collaborative and cooperative relationship to protect, preserve and promote natural resources on tribal lands. Last year Western delivered Federal power to only eight of the 100 tribes in its 15-state service area. Today, Western delivers power to more than twice that number.

"Western takes its responsibilities to the tribes in its service area seriously and will continue consultation to bring the benefits of Federal hydropower to the tribes," concluded Administrator **Mike HacsKaylo**. ■